

# Press Release



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## ***Hoeven Announces New State Park Program: Disabled Veterans/POWs Eligible for Free or Discounted Park Permits***

BISMARCK, N.D.—Gov. John Hoeven today announced North Dakota's disabled veterans and former prisoners of war will be eligible to receive free or discounted annual state park vehicle permits beginning January 2005.

“Our men and women in the service have always stepped forward to protect our nation's freedom and safety,” said Gov. Hoeven. “This new state Parks and Recreation program is one way to recognize the sacrifices our men and women in uniform have made in serving our state and our country.”

The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department will provide free annual park permits to former prisoners of war (POW) and disabled veterans with a 100 percent, service-related disability. Disabled veterans with lesser degrees of service-related disabilities are eligible to purchase the 2005 annual permits at a discounted price of \$20.

“All veterans are important, but the nation's disabled vets and POWs are particularly special,” said Carol Sigl, president of the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council. “This program highlights the excellent cooperation that exists between veterans groups and state government in providing services to our POWs and disabled veterans.”

An estimated 6,500 North Dakota veterans have a service-connected disability and approximately 80 state residents were POWs.

“State parks provide tranquil places to relax with family and friends,” said Doug Prchal, director of the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department. “We are pleased to offer this program to our POWs and disabled veterans as a small way to say thank you for your service.”

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*Play in our backyard!*

All state parks will host a Military Appreciation Day on Memorial Day, beginning in 2005. State park entrance fees will be waived on the Memorial Day holiday for present and former military personnel and their families.

Annual park permits are valid for entrance to any of the 13 state parks and recreation areas managed by Parks and Recreation. The new program does not apply to camping or other park fees. Fees collected for vehicle entrance, camping and other park facility rentals fund state park operation costs.

To receive a free or discounted permit, veterans must apply each year in person at any North Dakota state park or at the State Parks and Recreation office in Bismarck. Proof of disability or POW status is required. Forms of proof include a North Dakota disabled veteran or POW license plate, or a VA letter or card stating the degree of disability or POW status.